

154

SOUTH AMERICAN INDIANS

[E. A. E. Bull. 145]

304 Prichard (1902, p. 22) states that children's heads were so bandaged as to produce [intentionally?] flattening of the back of the skull. Two types of cradle were used: a flat cradle, apparently of ladder type (Vignati, 1938 a, pp. 73-74), to which the infant was tied, and which could be swung from the roof of the toldo by means of things attached to its four corners; a curved wicker cradle (fig. 20) placed, with the child in it, on the horse's haunch behind the mother [55] when she traveled horseback (cf. Vignati, 1938 a, for details). Parents were often known by the name of their child (Musters, 1871, p. 177).

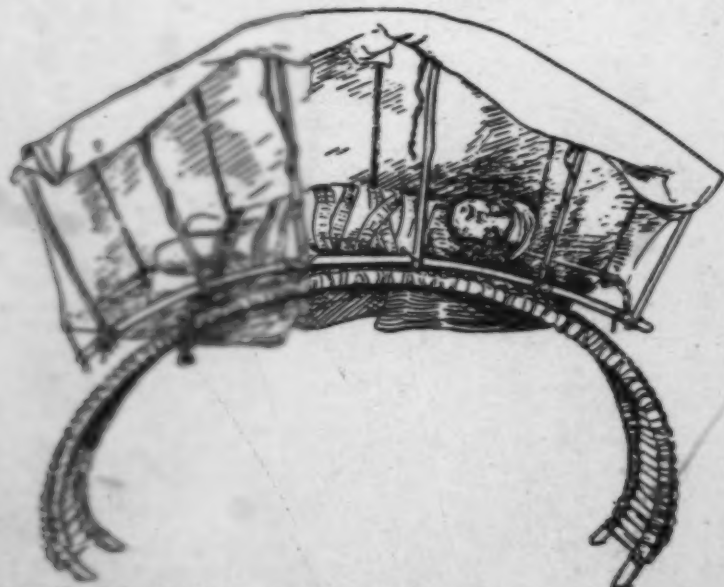


FIGURE 20.—Tehuelche child's cradle for use on horseback. (After de la Vaulx, 1901, p. 169.)

152 At the birth of a child, wealthy parents summoned the medicine man, who painted himself white and bled himself in the temple, forearm, or leg with a bodkin; a special tent, the "pretty house," was erected; mares were slaughtered and a feast held; toward evening, a fire was lighted in front of the pretty house, and to the accompaniment of drum and musical bow, the men, wearing ostrich plumes on their heads and a bell-studded strap from shoulder to thigh, danced four at a time (Musters, 1871, p. 178; 1872, pp. 199-200). A horse was killed at the eruption of a child's first teeth (Viedma, 1837 b, p. 78). If a child hurt itself playing, a "pretty house" was erected, mares were slaughtered, and a feast dance were held (Musters, 1872, pp. 201-202).

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE TEHUELCHES. 185

nearly lost his life in consequence, and his tears and abject525 supplications showed the terror he was in, but happily he on this occasion escaped. Strange to say, I was in no way suspected, although I knew where the tobacco was kept, which I doubt if the deserter did.

The game of ball is confined to the young men, and is526 played as follows. A lazo is laid on the ground so as to form a ring about four yards in diameter; the players, generally eight in number, step into the circle naked, with the exception of the waistcloth. A ball composed of hide stuffed with feathers, about the size of or larger than a tennis-ball, is used by each party, who throw it up from under the thigh, and strike it with the hand at the adversaries', each hit counting a point. Great dexterity and activity are shown by the young men, and although I never joined in any of their regular matches, I frequently watched the parties occupied in the game, in which their splendid muscular development was brought out conspicuously. Besides these amusements, the Indians, when ammunition is plentiful, occasionally fire at a mark; but as their bullets are frequently hammered round with stones, the practice is at times erratic, and the guns are also sometimes more dangerous to the marksman than the mark.

The daily routine of occupations and amusements is varied 852 sometimes by a fight, and more pleasantly by some one or other of the ceremonials which mark—as in all nations—the principal epochs of *Taoneca* life, from the cradle to the grave. On the birth of a child, if the parents are rich, i.e., own plenty of mares and horses, and silver ornaments, notice is immediately given to the doctor or wizard of the tribe, and to the cacique and relations. The doctor, after bleeding himself with bodkins in the temple, fore-arm, or leg, gives the order for the erection of a *mandil* tent, or pretty house as the Indians call it, and mares are slaughtered, and a feast and dance follow, such as described in Chapter III., page 80, as having taken place in the valley of the *Rio Chico*. The *cor*

592 position as secretary and general referee next in rank to the cacique, scarcely reconciled me to the exchange of the orderly comfort of Mrs. Orkeke's household for the dignified discomfort of my present quarters. They were also shared by Meña, whose good qualities had raised him above his fellow-Chilians. Their number had been reduced to four, Arica having disappeared whilst hunting near Teckel: without doubt his quarrelsome disposition had occasioned his death at the hands of some one whom he had insulted or offended.

133 The route followed led northwards through a valley on both sides of which we hunted, and arrived in the afternoon at an encampment called Carge-kaik, or Four Hills. There was nothing remarkable in the scenery: the hill-sides on either hand were covered with scrub, and the summits presented masses of rocks, and in some places loose boulders, amongst which numerous armadilloes were basking in the sun. They

136 are easily captured, as they are very slow; but if they once get into their burrow it is difficult to extract them, owing to the tenacity with which they hold fast to the soil. They are

252 very good eating, and are usually cooked in the shell on the fire, the entrails, &c., being taken out, and the cavity filled with heated stones. When they are in their best condition, one leg is sufficient for a man, as there is about an inch of yellow fat on them. Of the shells the women make work-
281 baskets, to contain their bodkins, sinews, &c., when sewing,
415 or to serve as colour-boxes for the different colours when painting.

● 852 The day following our arrival, Tankelow and another Indian were despatched as messengers to the party of Araucanian Indians, or Manzaneros, supposed to be encamped a few marches distant. During that night a child was born, the parents of which were rich, and accordingly a great slaughter of mares took place, the mandil tent was erected, and a feast and dance announced.

648 Meanwhile, about four P.M., the chasquis returned, bring-
576 ing with them an Araucanian Indian, who was escorted to

our toldo in due form amidst a curious crowd, all eager to look at him, while he preserved a grave and stolid demeanour. After the usual ceremonious formalities, he sat down, and by means of an interpreter stated himself to be a son of Quintuhual, a chief residing at present about four marches to the north. His father had with much pleasure received the courteous message sent by Casimiro, and it would give him equal gratification to welcome the Tehuelches; but he signified a desire first to meet Casimiro alone. This the latter monarch did not appear to see in the same light—if I may be allowed the expression—as it seemed to forbode no good intentions; but he replied evasively, and thus the colloquy terminated.

This Indian was about the middle height, dressed in ⁶⁴⁸coloured ponchos, with a silk handkerchief round his head. His features were regular, with restless sparkling black eyes, and complexion about the same as that of the Gauchos of the Rio de la Plata. He wore his hair cut short, and his general cleanly appearance afforded a strong contrast to the flowing locks and paint-bedaubed bodies of the Tehuelches.

Giving up my sleeping-place to him, we soon made him ⁵⁷⁶at home, and, after he had had some dinner, we proceeded in ⁵³⁵company to watch the dancers, who were vigorously stepping out round the fire in front of the mandil tent. Here we were joined by Jackechan, whose knowledge of the Araucanian language enabled us to maintain a conversation. Presently, by particular request, I joined Golwin (White) and two others in the dance, coming out in full costume of ostrich feathers and girdle of bells, and properly painted, to the great delight of the Indians. My performance elicited general applause; and at last all retired for the night, myself taking my saddle-gear and sleeping under a bush near the toldo.

After a delicious breakfast of fried fish, cooked most ⁵⁵²skillfully by Mocha, we prepared to march again, the chasqui bidding us farewell for the present, and by nine a.m. the

horse they can catch; whilst the girls play at making miniature 257
tobacco, and sitting in them.

The Indians evince great affection for their children, in- 261
dulging them in every way, and never chastising them for frolics
or acts of mischief. They are inveterate gamblers, manufacturing 225
their own cards out of hide, and will sometimes remain two
or three days without food, as it is unlucky to eat whilst play-
ing, absorbed in games of chance, on which they stake all their
possessions. The men, also, when opportunity offers, race their
horses, winning and losing heavy stakes on the result; but I am
bound to say that fool play is unknown, and all debts of honour
are scrupulously paid on the spot. They also play a game with 254
stones resembling the "knucklebones" of English school-boys,
and a game of ball, played by eight players, four on each side, 226
within a ring marked by a line laid on the ground: two balls
are used, made of hide stuffed with feathers; the player throws
the ball up from under the thigh, and strikes it with his hand
at the adversary, each hit counting a point.

They are dependent for food almost entirely on the chase; the 262
statements that they eat raw meat have probably arisen from
their custom of sometimes eating the heart, marrow, liver, blood,
and kidneys, raw. The meat is invariably cooked, that of the
ostrich being preferred. The most usual method of cooking on 252
the hunting ground is to prepare the bird so as to form a bag,
enclosing the meat with hot stones, which is placed on the em-
bers, the breath being thus retained. In camps, they also roast
the meat on spits, or sometimes boil it. The iron pots are, how-
ever, more generally used for frying out the grease or marrow.
Their occasional vegetable diet consists of the roots of a species 262
of wild potato, found, however, only in a few localities, a de-
scription of spinach, and a few other plants, when procurable.
They also eat the leaves of the dandelion, which is frequently 237
met with in the grassy valleys; and wild currants, strawberries,
apples, and pifones, when in the parts where they abound. In
fact, they readily eat any fruit or vegetable products obtain-
able; and are great consumers of salt, obtained in sufficient 247
quantity from various salinas. They occasionally chew a species
of gum which exudes from the *incaebush*; this, however, is
intended as a dentifrice. Intercourse with settlements has taught 273
the Tehuelches the use of tobacco, sugar, herbs, and rum; some 276
of which, however, are looked upon as indispensable, with the
exception of tobacco, which is always prepared for smoking by 177
a mixture of chips of wood: many of them, however, neither
smoke nor drink.

On the birth of a child, if the parents are rich, i.e., own plenty 282 ●
of horses, horses, and other ornaments, notice is immediately

- 182 sent to the doctor or wisard of the tribe, and to the cacique and relations. The doctor, after blinding himself with bodkins, and painting himself white, gives the order for the erection of a tent called by the Indians "the pretty house". The women immediately collect together their mantles, a description of wove blanket, obtained from the Aravianians, and sew them together to form the covering of the toldo; some of the women then place the necessary stakes in the ground to form the toldo, and the young men, taking the mantles, march several times round the stakes to frighten away the devil, the old women singing and crying in a discordant manner, and then draw the covering over the stakes; harpoons, with brass plates and streamers attached, are placed in front, the whole forming a gay-looking toldo. The men then mount their horses, and after a short interval, mares are brought up and knuckled on the head in front of the tent, after which the meat is either portioned out to the several families, or cooked on the spot, all being free to come and eat. Towards evening a fire is kindled in front of the mantil-tent, and a dance takes place after the following manner: The men and women sit down at the opposite sides of the fire, except the musicians, who sit in the tent; their instruments consist of a small drum formed by a piece of hide stretched over a bowl, and played on with two sticks, and a wind instrument, formed from the thickness of a gannet, with holes bored in it, which is applied to the mouth, and played on with a small wooden bow, having a horse-hair string, after a preliminary tune and howling on the part of the old women. Four Indians, shuffled up to their eyes in their mantles, wearing on their heads plumes of the so-called catfish (*Ather Derivich*), step on the scene; they first of all pace majestically round the fire, then quicken their pace to a sort of little trot; after two rounds the time is quickened, they throw aside their mantles, and appear with their bodies naked, except the waistcloth, painted all over, each one wearing also a strip studded with bells, extending from the shoulder to the thigh. At the moment that the mantles are thrown on one side, they dance in quick time to the music in not ungraceful steps, at the same time lowering their plumed heads most grotesquely, in time to the taps of the drum on either side. When tired, they remove their mantles, retire for a drink of water, and then come on again dancing a different step. When they are fatigued, four more take their places, and so on, till all present have had their turn. When many Indians are present, these performances often last until a late hour of the night. The women, who only participate as spectators, mark their approval of any particularly good dancer by a howl which may be considered a sort of encore. I have on one or two occasions known these dissipation carried on for two or three evenings in succession.